

CATOCTONES ATTEND INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION

By Jim Spiller, Bass

Merle Pinnekamp, Stan Thomas, Phil Rhoderick, Rich Heffner, and Jim Spiller were among the fortunate Catoctones members who attended the International Convention of the Barbershop Harmony Society in Philadelphia recently. In addition to them, dual members Dean Martin and Don Thompson were there competing with the Alexandria Harmonizers chorus. And how they competed, taking fifth place in international ranking! Congratulations to all Harmonizers, but especially to Dean and Don!

Rich Heffner, Jim Spiller, and their wives arrived at the convention on Wednesday afternoon, June 30, too late, unfortunately to hear any of the collegiate quartet competition. Score sheets for the collegians were available at our hotel on check-in, though, and it was great to see that Swedish Match, from guess where, took top honors in that division. Rich and Jim and spouses did attend the quartet quarterfinals that evening, starting off their saturation days with barbershop harmony.



Thursday morning was the Good News! Gospel Sing in historic Arch Street United Methodist Church, featuring Happiness Emporium/Good News! And OC Times quartets, and lots of great singing by a church full of barbershoppers and their family members. Quartet semifinals occupied most of the day, but Rich and Jim managed to attend the Association of International Champions (AIC) show that evening. Only past international champions, both choruses and quartets, perform on this show, and as you would imagine, it was outstanding from start to finish.

Chorus contest was Friday all day. Although many were pulling for The Vocal Majority, whose director, Jim Clancy, was leading his men for the last time, it was The Westminster (CA) Chorus who took the gold medal, with VM placing second. Competition was very tight, as one would expect, and only six-tenths of a point separated the top two choruses.

To entertain the audience during judging and other breaks, Greg Pappas, world renowned portrait artist, painted to music. And in about 6-8 minutes, he would turn out a larger than life portrait of famous show people or BHS personalities, PAINTED UPSIDE DOWN!!! He was most entertaining to watch and a pleasure to visit with.



Saturday was mostly free of competition, so many folks took advantage of going to Independence Hall, the Liberty Bell, and seeing parts of historic Philadelphia. That evening the quartet finals were held. Storm Front, a comedy quartet from Colorado Springs area, took the gold with riotous performances that had them (and sometimes, the audience) rolling in the aisles. Old School, representing our Mid-Atlantic District, took second, and two international quartets,

Ringmasters (Sweden) and Musical Island Boys (New Zealand) took third and fourth. It may not be long before the internationals strike gold!

Philadelphia was having an Independence Day parade Sunday and barbershoppers were invited to march in it. Our guys decided, instead, to head for home to see what our local celebrations held in store.

If you ever have opportunity to attend an International Convention, do so! It's the thrill of a lifetime. And there will be another close one when Pittsburg hosts in 2015. It always goes over the 4th of July, so begin planning now for your trip to the Steel City in five years.

By Rich Heffner, Tenor

Philadelphia was my second International event, the other being Pittsburg in 1982. Wow, have the performances gotten better over time! Not only do they sing great, the choreography is amazing!! As the contest went on, it was fun trying to place the choruses and quartets close to what the judges might think. Some we liked, some we loved - don't misunderstand me, but all of them are a lot better than King's Chorders (sorry guys). The 11th place Quartet, Lunch Break (very funny), were the mic testers for the Saturday night finals. In their second round set, they imitated athletes. The largest of the four, the tenor, prepared for the running long jump over the other three, who he directed to gradually get lower and lower. Finally he had them laying on the stage floor, and then he rolled over them! What a hoot, and then the three had major trouble getting up off the floor to complete the set.

The crowd was disappointed they did not make the cut. So as Lunch Break tested the mic for the finals, part way through their second song, out came the 12th place quartet, High Definition, who pushed Lunch Break away from the mic and sang part of their own song. As Lunch Break composed themselves, they forced H. D. away and continued. As this calmed down, out came the 13th place quartet, Forefront, and they did about the same thing. Well, before we realized it, ALL of the top 20 Quartets had done the same thing, pushing or sliding in front of Lunch Break. The crowd loved it, with all quartet numbers 11 through 20 taking a bow. We also saw John Reece, and Don Thompson and Dean Martin, who both sing with the Alexandria Harmonizers. Great job, guys! Gentlemen, please try to make at least one International in your lifetime - you will not be disappointed.